

# Lights, Bitters, CAMRA Action.

## Newsletter – April 2023

By David Lloyd

The current style newsletters will, we hope, keep you up to date with changes and what's on in not just your local branch/patch but some festivals near enough to visit. Contact details are at the foot of the newsletter.

### Last Call for the [Ale Trail](#) - Saturday 22nd April

We have an Ale Trail around Ely's pubs on Saturday 22nd April meeting at the West End PH at 2pm. Just turn up and join us. The trail will take us via the Prince Albert, The Cutter, The Drayman's Son, The Royal Standard and 3at3. If you have the legs or the willpower, anyone left will make for the five city centre pubs. What I would say about this is that if you make an effort for this one, it'll help us keep it going for when you feel more adventurous, so come on down, we've put it on and enjoy yourselves!

This month;

1. Ale Trail. Calendar of events.
2. Going Out-Out to London Town cont. Sad passing of Simon (of Simon's Cider), Elysian beer festival debrief.
3. Ale trail around Ely, Cambridge BF Run & Trip, AGM report; many changes.
4. The Tale End – Tolly Cobbold remembered.

### Other festivals coming up are:

**Eddington (pop up) Beer Garden.** NC. BBQ. M. Friday 28<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> April. Storey's Field Centre, Eddington Square, Cambridge.

**Black Horse, Rampton Beer Festival.** NC. F. M. Friday 28<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> April.

**Wicken Beer Festival.** NC. M. F. Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May, 4pm-12am. Free entry, around 20 real ales, BBQ, currently 2 bands confirmed. Recreation Ground, Wicken CB7 5XZ.

**City of Ale Festival.** Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> May – 25<sup>th</sup> June. The Waterfront, 139-141 King St, Norwich NR1 1QH.



**Cambridge Beer Festival.** Summer. 22<sup>nd</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> May. Jesus Green, Cambridge. (Ely branch run & trip Friday).

**North Norfolk Railway Rails & Ales Event.** NC. 9<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> June. Strictly beer and the smell of coal fired locomotives!

**The Cutter, Ely Beer Festival.** NC. Friday 16<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> June. 16+ ales and 2 ciders.

**Burwell Cricket Club.** NC. 23<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> June. Friday 6-10pm – Saturday 2pm-11pm. Watch a match and have a beer! 10 ales and ciders.

**Wilburton Beer Festival.** NC. F. M. Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> to Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> June. Wilburton Recreation Ground CB6 3RB.

**Soham Beer & Music Festival.** NC. F. M. Friday 7<sup>th</sup> July 5pm+ – Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> July Noon-10pm. Soham Rotary Club, all proceeds to charity. Recreation Ground, just 400M from the railway station.

**East Anglian Beer & Cider Festival.** Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> – Monday 28<sup>th</sup> August. St Edmundsbury Cathedral.

**Chapel Beer Festival.** Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> – Monday 11<sup>th</sup> September. East Anglian Railway Museum, Station Rd, Wakes Colne, Colchester CO6 2DS.

\*TBC\* **Norwich Beer Festival. Monday.** F. M. 23<sup>rd</sup> – Saturday 28<sup>th</sup> October. [Norwich & District] Likely Ely branch run and trip.

Key: NC (non-CAMRA). M (music). F (food).

## London Town

Another trip down to London for the game v Italy saw us having a night out very close to Kings Cross ready for the trip home and that place was Camden Town. Some of what we saw makes interesting reading. When I asked Mum as a child, 'how expensive is London?' she replied; 'Some things cost a lot more, and some things a lot less!' and I couldn't put it any better myself all these years later. We were in the World's End pub opposite the station but it was half empty and at over £7 a pint can you be surprised! We had the only real ale for sale (but from a tap) and service made a mess of it and we couldn't hear ourselves think – time to move on.

The Camden Road Arms was a sparsely attended Brewdog pub and even when the beer was 'on' and not 'off' it was still pretty poor tasteless stuff while the cider was worse with mate Larry's cider being so sharp as to leave his pint there and if you knew Larry, well....



Beavertown and Brixton beers were on each tap and a word with the bar manager revealed all; 'These new chilled beers are all the rage, the younger customers love them. They aren't interested in real ale in itself; this is what they want'.

A message from Mike Playle our Cider Officer.

### Simon's Cider

*The East Anglian cider world was shocked and saddened this month by the death of Simon Gibson, the well-loved and highly respected proprietor of Simon's Cider. Both his face and his products have been a familiar sight for many years at pubs and festivals all over the region, and his departure will leave a hole in the hearts of many in the cider community.*

*As yet we have no concrete news on what this will mean for his business, or for the cider selection at the Drayman's Son on Fore Hill in Ely, but our readers can rest assured that the supply of locally produced craft cider will continue to flow unhindered.*

Mike

On to the Devonshire Arms, a dark goth pub with a Battle of the Goth Bands at one end and apparently, we are all going to die several times over and each time will be nastier than the previous death! It was rammed but there was no bitter on, just the Beavertown Neck Oil (Satan's blood anyone?) a bit of a favourite for me. At least the place was alive only this time they all wanted to be dead; there really is no pleasing some people!

Time for one more back near the station, the Camden Eye is on the pointy end between two streets and affords 150-degree panoramic view. No music, some real ale and staff pleased to see you (well Ok, the barmaids fancied Arron but I'll ride on anyone's good fortune) and we could all sit together and sup some ale. Alas there they were, the only two hand pumps we'd seen in 4 pubs. In the middle of the bar though was a fat horizontal chrome tube though with all the 'pump clips' on it from left to right announcing that they were all beers, a sight to gladden my heart you'd think.



I'm glad we tried the pubs in that order as luck happens, I'm optimistic that if ale can't win here, the pressure on sales by not just ale but also stout, cider, porter and now these modern chilled beers is at least doing the same and damaging the real enemy of the taste buds; tasteless lager.

## 2023 Elysian Beer Festival debrief

I was unable to make the meeting held back in February but from the notes I can say that the Branch raised a splendid £800 for charity, a great effort but may have lost several thousands of pounds (I've withdrawn the figures) and later changed to 'maybe breaking even' at the AGM for the overall festival for Ely CAMRA. Some of this can be squarely put on the fact that the BFO - Ron – came in late and took his first BF meeting 60 days after Tony had originally pencilled in his first meeting which made it a hard place to recover from. A new bank account wasn't operating till late, too late it would seem and so the request for the required CAMRA funding was initially turned down on this point thus delaying us further. Hard work went into making up for these setbacks but a lack of long-term publicity, the rail strike and the 6-Nations Rugby all have their part to play in the end result.

There were many positives to take from the festival and to hear such news is a downer for every volunteer who put their back into it, we all want to feel we were part of something that has a good outcome. I know that Ron and Lloyd will once again want me to thank every volunteer who stepped up and helped, you are the stars and thank you again. We will learn from this and it helps that the paying drinker thought it was a great festival, had a pleasant experience drinking good beers and ciders, good food and a great atmosphere but most of all, we can know that they will be back again next year.

## Cambridge Beer Festival Trip - Friday 26th May

We have a Cambridge Beer Festival run organised for CAMRA members in our area, the date is Friday 26th May and we'll meet in front of Ely station for 11.00am, breaking into small groups for travel discount tickets although I suspect the already cheap prices won't be much cheaper! The afternoon session is 12 noon till 5pm before closing for one hour. 11.17am is the outward train and you can pick your own time for the return but I suspect it'll be the 5.29pm or 5.37pm train for most. Non-CAMRA members can accompany members.

## AGM brings changes

The meeting was chaired by CAMRA Regional Director Andrea Briers, who guided the meeting meticulously as all sensed that something was afoot. Always a delicate thing to have to talk about, the AGM took place on the evening of Tuesday 4th April and it's a good job I'm not the 'recording officer' as I never really heard much of it, the Tinnitus is louder than the people nowadays.

The talking point of the evening will be that Tony Gimbert stood against incumbent Kiera Delaney to be Chairperson. Both had their supporters but Tony won a secret ballot to take the position. The loss of Keira also saw more changes and two more going out in Treasurer Dana Altland and Secretary Lloyd Vella but with many new faces coming in. Phil Utting-Brown took Treasurer, Michelle Butler takes Secretary while Paul Butler is still Social Media, Mike Playle is still Cider and Membership officer, 'Till' Utting-Brown is the Social Secretary, I took both Newsletter and Rural Pubs Officer - officially now. Chris Lockwood is the Vice Chairman.



The first committee meeting is being held at The Carpenter's Arms, Soham on Tuesday 2nd May 7.30 for 7.45pm start and remember, all CAMRA branch members are welcome at any CM.

This probably leaves the way clear now for Tony to take Beer Festival Organiser which is what he really wants and leaves room for his partner in crime one Mr Phillip 'Wiggy' Wignall to come back and look after the beers; member or not! Well, I trust his better half is a member and no doubt ticked the 'family membership' box when joining each year but much mischief has been made of this point (not least from Wiggy!) and I'll stir the pot a bit more.

Other points made were that a few members aren't getting the e-mails and Mike Playle has kindly offered to look into it. It's a shame that three good committee members have moved on plus one BFO and Phil Utting-Brown beat me to thanking them for their services. We must hope that we make good over the next 12-months but even Tony will tell you we must not only get the Elysian Beer Festival sorted first time but also prepare several people for future roles.





It's worth mentioning that we are still light on a couple of officers and although we have a 'name', we'd love to see someone take the job that would carry it on with vigorous energy! Well, maybe not too vigorous for some of you but the first is one I'd thoroughly enjoy and believe in and that is the LocAle officer. This is (essentially) an attempt to link Cambridgeshire micro brewers to local pubs that promise to always have one 'lewkel' brew on their taps.

### The Tale End; The lumps of Ol' Tolly Cobbold

Who recalls one of the big 'lewkel' players back in the last century? Tolly Cobbold of Ipswich wasn't a bad drop when served well but all too often it just wouldn't be right, in some ways it was the beer that turned everyone to lager after Watney's Red Barrel had got the ball rolling. The brewery was near to Ipswich Docks but on reflection the brewery should – perhaps have been IN the Dock for its beer after all, why leave people thinking they might dislike it when you can make them pay for a pint to prove it! The problem with Tolly Original was the view.

The VIEW you say! Well, yes. You see Tolly Cobbold beer always had little lumps of a yellow 'cheese like' substance in the bottom of your glass. A light yellow in colour and 2-3mm across they could look like a chipped tooth. You always left 2-3mm of your Tolly best bitter in the bottom when drinking, keeping an eye on the bottom of your glass as your pint disappeared.

Slip sideways for a moment in time to a foolish moment of mine (stick around, I have plenty), when I helped

form the Cambridge League of Gentlemen based out of The Green Man in Grantchester, then a local favourite of Stavros Loadsamoney. This was the time of Maggie T and Harry Enfield's 'Loadsa money' and extravagant spending. Our first trip at the CLG was a coach trip to the Tolly Brewery one mid-week evening and the big talk was of whether even the brewery tap room would have 'the lumps' but most agreed this was just in-tolly-able (sorry!) and that any right-minded pub let alone the much-fabled Tap Room would never have them and it was perhaps just the unlucky 30 pubs that we all knew that had them (without exception) – and just bad luck right?



After a tour of the brewery during which all we could think about was the tap room, we all keenly awaited our lump-less beer and sandwiches and so we finally entered the mythical 'brewery tap room' and there, our guide introduced us to 'Fred and Bert' who had 171 years of experience - each! - and they began pouring beer, the real stuff – you know, lump-less! When our beers were passed over there it was in all its majesty, the golden pint we'd waited for and in the bottom of everyone's glasses; more lumps than we'd ever seen!

Till next time, Cheers!

Please help us tell others; if you know something then tell us about it and we'll pass it on. If you have something to discuss and debate, a taxi, a train you want to organise; why not join the Facebook page; ['Ely & District CAMRA'](#) and belt it out there? If you have any news for this newsletter then drop me a line via email at [david@taffmeisters.co.uk](mailto:david@taffmeisters.co.uk) or text me on 07951010542. The views expressed here are those of myself and don't necessarily represent those of the CAMRA committee. Photos this month; courtesy of Google. David 'Taffy' Lloyd